

## Taking Your Medicine Safely

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When you take medicine, there are important safety issues to consider. Here are guidelines to help you:

**1. Keep a record of all of the medicines that you are currently taking.**

List ALL prescribed and over-the-counter (non-prescribed) medicines, vitamins, minerals, herbs, and other supplements.

For each medicine on the list, include the information below:

- name of the medicine (brand name and generic name)
- date when the medicine was prescribed or started
- reason for taking the medicine
- possible side effects of the medicine
- how the medicine should be taken:
  - how much to take with each dose
  - how many doses to take each day
  - what time to take the medicine each day
  - whether to take the medicine with food or on an empty stomach
  - any foods or liquids you cannot have while on this medicine

**2. Keep a list of all your allergies and reactions to any medicines or vaccines.**

**3. Take your medicine record and your allergy/reaction list with you to every doctor's appointment.**

**4. Update your medicine record when a new medicine is added, or when a medicine is no longer needed.**

**5. Know other important information about your medicines:**

- how long to keep taking the medicine
- what to do if a dose is missed
- if the medicine needs to be stored in a special way

**6. Try a 7-day pill organizer, if you take a lot of different medicines.**

This can help you keep track of the correct time and day to take each of your medicines. It will help you notice if you miss any doses. You can buy an organizer at your drugstore.

**7. Take these other safety tips:**

- Keep medicines stored in their original containers when possible.
- Keep all of your medicines in one place.
- **Do not** store medicines in the bathroom. Unless instructed otherwise, keep medicines away from heat, direct sunlight, and moisture.
- **Do not** store medicines next to pet medicines, cleaning products, or other household chemicals.
- **Do not** take someone else's medicines.
- **Do not** share your medicine with anyone.
- Use the same pharmacy for all medicines if possible.

**8. Destroy any medicines you no longer use to prevent a mix-up.**

- Take old medicines out of their original containers, and put both in the trash.
- For added safety, to protect children, pets, and the environment:
  - Mix the medicine with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter. Then put it in a sealable bag, an empty can, or other type of container.
  - On the label of the medicine's original container, scratch out all identifying information before you put it in the trash.

- **Do not** flush medicines down the toilet **unless** the label or patient information that comes with the medicine says to do so.
- Call your city or county's household trash and recycling service (see the blue pages in the phone book). Ask if a drug take-back program is available. Take-back programs allow you to take unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal.

**9. Always talk to your doctor or your pharmacist if:**

- you have a question about any medicine you are taking
- you are not able to take the medicine as prescribed
- you notice any problems or side effects that may be related to your medicines
- you start taking any new medicines that have not been prescribed